

“Unchangeably Alive”: Karl Barth’s Trinitarian Doctrine of the Divine Constancy¹

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Abstract

Karl Barth shapes his treatment of the divine constancy (immutability) around the notion of God as “the One who loves in freedom.” In this essay I argue that Barth’s trinitarian theology furnishes him with another essential, albeit easily unrecognized, resource in conceiving of divine immutability. One task of this essay is to illuminate the subtle trinitarian framework for Barth’s treatment of the divine constancy. Along the way I expound upon the significance of Barth’s trinitarian theology in working to reconcile a notion of divine immutability with the revealed vitality of God in the divine work of creation and reconciliation. Furthermore, in response to a critique by Wolfhart Pannenberg, I make the case that Barth’s doctrine of the divine constancy opens up a new depth of perspective in the way that he conceives of the relation between the divine love and freedom along trinitarian lines.

Karl Barth situates his treatment of the divine constancy, Barth’s preferred term for divine immutability,² within the context of his doctrine of God as “the One who Loves in Freedom” (*Church Dogmatics* [CD] II/1, §28). The key features of Barth’s doctrine of God are evident in this slogan: God loves in the plenitude of the divine freedom, and expresses this freedom in the eternality of the divine love.

1 This article represents a slightly revised version of a paper presented at the Canadian Evangelical Theological Association/Northeastern Seminary joint theological conference, “Participating in God’s Mission,” held at Northeastern Seminary, Rochester, NY, on March 19, 2016.

2 Barth’s preference for constancy over immutability is largely semantic. It specifies the positive dimension of God’s unchangeability. *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of God*, II/1, eds. G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker, W. B. Johnston, Harold Knight and J. L. M. Haire (Edinburgh: T&T Clark LTD, 1957), 495. I am thus less inclined than Henrikus Berkhof to identify this move with Barth’s polemical comments on the “pure *immobile*” (CD II/1, 494). “The (Un) Changeability of God,” in *Grace Upon Grace: Essays in Honor of Lester J. Kuyper*, ed. James I. Cook (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 23.

Even a cursory reading of Barth's formal doctrine of the divine constancy in §31.2 of *CD* II/1 makes clear just how much Barth relies on the attributes, or what Barth calls perfections, of the divine love and freedom. What God does, writes Barth, "in virtue of His freedom for the sake of His love" is never "surrender," but always a "self-affirmation of His freedom and His Love." Barth hastens to add: the "living God in His self-affirmation is the immutable (God)" (*CD* II/1, 495).

In this essay I propose to explore the view of Trinity in Barth's formal treatment of the divine constancy.³ In the introduction to this treatment Barth claims that God not only lives in self-affirmation of the divine life, but also in "eternal self-repetition (*ewiger Wiederholung*)" of it (*CD* II/1, 492; *Kirchliche Dogmatik [KD]* II/1, 554).⁴ The reader familiar with the doctrine of revelation from the first volume of the *CD* will at once recognize an allusion here to Barth's trinitarian theology: God exists in a "three-fold repetition" of the divine being; the "one God in each repetition" as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In turn, the repetition of God's being in eternity mirrors the repetition of God in revelation and the thrice-repeated disclosure of God's lordship that accompanies it (*CD* I/1, 299, 351).⁵ God's activity in created reality (*ad extra*), as such, has its basis within the triune being of God itself (*ad intra*). A likened pattern can be detected in Barth's construal of the divine constancy.

While the influence of Barth's doctrine of God's being—that is, the divine love

3 Engagement with Barth's doctrine of the divine constancy has tended in one of four directions. (1) Most prominent is the investigation into the relation between Isaak A. Dorner's three-part essay on immutability from the 1850s and Barth's construal (see *CD* II/1, 493 for Barth's note of indebtedness to Dorner). Robert Sherman, "Isaak August Dorner on Divine Immutability: A Missing Link between Schleiermacher and Barth," in *The Journal of Religion* 77/3 (1997): 380–401; and most extensively, Sang Eun Lee, *Karl Barth und Isaak August Dorner: Eine Untersuchung zu Barths Rezeption der Theologie Dorners* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH., 2011), 153–198. (2) Bruce L. McCormack assesses the relation between the divine constancy and Barth's more christologically attuned doctrine of God as reflected in his treatment of election in *CD* II/2. "The Actuality of God: Karl Barth in Conversation with Open Theism," in *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 231–42. (3) Colin E. Gunton puts it in conversation with the process thinker, Charles Hartshorne. *Becoming and Being*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 205–207. (4) Finally, the following offer some of the few sustained engagements with Barth on the topic: Todd B. Pokrifka focuses on Barth's use of Scripture and also the connection to Dorner. *Redescribing God: The Roles of Scripture, Tradition and Reason in Karl Barth's Doctrine of Divine Unity, Constancy and Eternity* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 197–247. Likewise, Robert B. Price takes up Barth's notion of constancy while also attending to McCormack's proposal. Price gives rare attention to the place of the Trinity. *Letters of the Divine Word: The Perfections of God in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 128–43, esp. 130–32. This essay can be seen as a further extension of Price's analysis.

4 Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* II/1 (Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1980).

5 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1: *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975). Price states: "When Barth says that the divine constancy is grounded in the 'self-repetition' of the divine life, he means that constancy is a perfection of the divine essence in, and not abstracted from, the eternal triune relations between Father, Son and Spirit." *Letters of the Divine Word*, 130.

and freedom—in his formal treatment of divine immutability is relatively clear, the impact of Barth's trinitarian theology for his understanding of the divine constancy is far less evident. Barth makes only a limited number of references to the doctrine of the Trinity in the entirety of this paragraph. Nevertheless, Barth's trinitarian theology, as I will argue, furnishes him with an important, albeit easily unrecognized resource for conceiving of divine immutability and the question of God's relation to the world. The primary task of this essay is to draw out the way in which Barth's trinitarian thought supplies a basis for his construal of God's activity in creation and the work of reconciliation in light of the immutable being of God. Following this I will look back to the connection between Trinity and the animating features of Barth's doctrine of God in the divine love and freedom. Wolfhart Pannenberg once critiqued Barth for not adequately linking the divine love and freedom in view of the trinitarian notion of God.⁶ Barth's notion of constancy can by no means be used to provide an exhaustive response to Pannenberg's critique. However, as I will show, Barth's doctrine of the divine constancy opens up a new depth of perspective in the way that he conceives of the relation between the divine love and freedom along trinitarian lines.

Trinity and Divine Constancy

Barth's treatment of the divine constancy in §31.2 begins with an affirmation of the classical conception of God as immutable being and proceeds to address the theme through scriptural exegesis and assessment of its place in the theological tradition. Here Barth lays out his criticism of the static conception of immutability with the Protestant scholastic Polanus and Barth's own qualified notion of a "holy mutability" in God (*CD* II/1, 496).⁷ The remainder of the paragraph, following Robert B. Price's ordering, breaks down into two subsequent sections: God's involvement in the stages of salvation history and the immutability of God as it comes to expression in Jesus Christ.⁸

Barth's theological method shapes his construal of the divine constancy. It is characteristic of Barth's theology to proceed on the basis of God's self-revelation. This entails theological formulations, at least in intention, built from the ground up in view of the scriptural testimony to God's salvific actions. The divine con-

6 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Problemgeschichte der neueren evangelischen Theologie in Deutschland: von Schleiermacher bis zu Barth and Tillich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 259; also, Pannenberg, "Problems of a Trinitarian Doctrine of God," in *Dialog* 26, trans. Philip Clayton (1987): 251.

7 Bruce A. Ware provides a summary statement of this idea: the capacity of God "to change in his attributes, conduct and relationships with humans in ways that both accord with his changeless intrinsic moral nature and properly confront the human moral situation." "An Evangelical Reformulation of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God," in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29/4 (Dec 1986), 440.

8 Price, *Letters of the Divine Word*, 129.

stancy is no different. The meaning of the concept of immutability is not given *a priori*, but rather is determined by the self-disclosure of God; or as Barth puts it, the subject—God—defines the predicate—immutability—and not vice versa (*CD* II/1, 493). As Katherine Sonderegger writes of Barth, apart from the act of God it is “no more meaningful or proper to say that God is unchanging than that God is essentially episodic, leaping in and out of Being like an impulse or broken signal.”⁹ And what is revealed in God’s dealings with Israel and the early Christian community is the unchangeability of God in bringing the covenantal relation to fulfillment and all the liveliness that entails. In this way Barth’s treatment of the divine constancy formulates the problem at hand just as Isaak Dorner did before him; that is, how to reconcile the *unchanging nature* of the being of God depicted in Holy Scripture with the divine *vitality* that marks God’s revelatory history.¹⁰

In order to reconcile the livingness of God with a notion of divine immutability, Barth—again, like Dorner—envisages the conceptual grounds for the activity of God in the world within the divine being itself. Barth describes such activity as an “overflowing [*Überströmen*]” of the divine plenitude (*CD* II/1, 505; *KD* II/1, 568).¹¹ The metaphor has a two-fold meaning: It highlights that, in relating to another, the essential being and identity of God remains intact. Moreover, it points to the dynamism of God’s self-grounded actions in the world. In his introductory remarks Barth makes reference to God as the “fullness of difference, movement, will,” the very “origin of all created change” (*CD* II/1, 491). Barth’s trinitarian theology, as we will see, allows him to conceive of the revelatory work and history of God as rooted, in particular way, within the divine life. It is a conception in which the pairing of God’s *immutable being* and *vitality* has its primal expression in the trinitarian reality of God. God, writes Barth, is “unchangeably alive [*unveränderlichen Lebendigkeit*]” (*CD* II/1, 511; *KD* II/1, 574).

Creation and Reconciliation

I turn now to the trinitarian theology of Barth as it underlies his treatment of salvation history and the immutable being of God. Noted above, explicit mention of the Trinity in §31.2 is sparse, occurring only once in any substantial way within this sub-section. That Barth’s trinitarian understanding of God, nevertheless, has

9 Katherine Sonderegger, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1, The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 103. See also Sonderegger’s insightful comparison of Barth’s doctrine of predication to the Euthyphro problem, 104.

10 Isaak A. Dorner, *Divine Immutability: A Critical Reconsideration*, trans. Robert R. Williams and Claude Welch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 135.

11 The metaphor has its basic meaning in Barth’s treatment of the being-in-act of God (*CD* II/1, §28): God “turns to us in the overflow of the perfection of His essence and therefore of His loving, and shares with us, in and with His love, its blessedness. This blessedness of the love of God is founded on the fact that He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and as such loves us: as our Creator, Mediator and Redeemer, as love itself, the One who loves eternally” (*CD* II/1, 283).

a material effect upon his construal of the divine constancy is what I will show in what follows. I begin with Barth's account of the work of creation.

Nothing in the reality that God brings forth compels God to create. On Barth's view, creation is, in keeping with the theological tradition, a free act of God. Moreover, it is an act that coheres with the very nature of God's being (*CD* II/1, 500). God acts in the freedom of the divine love. This applies both to God's being in itself, and, likewise, to all of God's externally directed acts. The work of creation as coherent with the being of God, however, is not to be understood as a kind of extension of the divine self with the world that comes to be. "What God has in Himself," writes Barth, "is the ground of [creation's] existence and essence and not that existence and essence itself" (*CD* II/1, 500). In fact, it is with the difference between God and created reality that the trinitarian basis of Barth's account comes into view.

Creation, writes Barth, is "the new thing of a reality distinct from [God]." It is the place, brought into existence by God, inclusive of "diversity," "vitality," "life and movement," a place of complexity and change (*CD* II/1, 500–501). The markers of worldly existence—diversity, novelty, and movement—are each brought into being through the creative work of God. Moreover, they have a prior basis in the being of God itself. What is created is not-God, distinct from God's self; and yet, insofar as it is "by God" in whom it has its "ground," it comes forth in a gracious act of freedom. Similarly, "it is by [God] that there is the new thing of a reality distinct from Himself . . . by Him that all new things in this reality exist . . . in the fact that He is the One who is eternally new" (*CD* II/1, 500). God, free and unchangeably alive, grounds creation in God's own being. Barth's trinitarian theology, however, further specifies how creation relates to the being of God in two ways.

First, in the doctrine of the Trinity from *CD* I/1 Barth details the begetting of the Son by the Father, and, likewise, of the Spirit from the Father and Son, to designate a primal and unique form of "origination" in the Godhead (395).¹² He goes on to describe this as an "event" in the divine life, a form of relationality in God inclusive of "movement" and in keeping with the eternal repetition of the three "modes [or ways] of being" in God (*CD* I/1, 355). In the eternal relations of God, in short, there is a movement, albeit an eternal one, of the second and third modes of being in God *from* the first.¹³

12 Similarly, Barth writes: "In contrast to everything that we know of origination and causation, creation denotes the divine action which has a real analogy, a genuine point of comparison, only in the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father, and therefore only in the inner life of God Himself, and not at all in the life of the creature." *Church Dogmatics* III/1, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey and H. Knight (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 13–14.

13 Barth's use of the term "modes of being [*Seinsweisen*]" intends to push back against a nineteenth century understanding of person as a distinct center of self-consciousness. *CD* I/1, 355–57, 359; *Die kirchliche Dogmatik* I/1 (Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1980), 374. On Barth's argument against the historic notion of modalism, see *CD* I/1, 382.

Second, Barth portrays the communion between the Father and Son as a “fellowship in separateness and separateness in fellowship.” The Spirit subtends this fellowship in God in such a way as to maintain the unity and plurality of the divine being at once (*CD I/1*, 480). In this way, the being of God in the life of the Father, Son, and Spirit takes shape in the form of a perennial communion. Their fellowship is the “negation of isolation” in God, patterned upon the unity and distinctions of God’s trinitarian being (*CD I/1*, 483). To be at once distinct *and* united gives expression to the internal movement that constitutes the eternal reality of God’s three modes of being. It is a kind of dialectical interplay of God’s unity-in-distinction and distinction-in-unity that manifests the vitality of God’s unique life.

As noted above, God is constant as the one who is “eternally new” (*CD II/1*, 500). No other reality in God captures the novelty, movement, and vitality of the divine being than does the inner-relationality, the unity and distinctions, of God’s three modes of being. Before there is a new reality, distinct from Godself, there is a *newness* that belongs to the dynamic life that characterizes the intradivine nature of God’s being; but, notably, a sense of novelty in which God remains who God is, or simply is God’s self. For this reason God can bring something new into being distinct from Godself, something in which ongoing change persists, and can relate to that new thing while maintaining the eternal self-identity of God. God *can* because the new is not alien to God but has its very source in God’s being as triune. The same pertains to the diversity that has its primal basis in the unity-in-distinction of the divine persons. The significance of this comes to fore in that God creates not only freely, that is, out of the divine self, but also with a purpose that conforms to the trinitarian life of God. A claim from Robert W. Jenson is apt here: “It is God’s Trinity that allows him to create freely but not arbitrarily.”¹⁴

What Barth has done here is to situate the conditions for the possibility of God’s relation to the world in the being of God itself. Creation, as we have seen, is an act of divine freedom and an expression of God’s love. Barth forefronts these perfections—the divine love and freedom—in his description of the divine constancy. Against the background of the doctrine of the Trinity, however, it becomes clearer that the internal grounds of creation belong at the most basic level to the being of God as Father, Son, and Spirit. For the freedom of the divine loving, in view of God as triune, is open to the new insofar as all novelty is rooted in the unchanging, yet lively, unity-in-distinctions that mark the divine life of God.

In dealing with the first stage of salvation history Barth offers an idea of the

14 Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2: *The Works of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 28.

grounds for creation in the self-same being of God (or, as I stressed, in God's triune being). In his subsequent treatment of salvation history's second stage, reconciliation, Barth turns his attention to the question of God's relation to the world in the sense of the divine presence to the fallen creature. How, in view of the divine constancy, do the actions of God before the fallen creature cohere with the truth of God's eternal identity? Moreover, it is here, in the reconciling work of God, that Barth narrows in on the notion of a history of God "in and with the world created by him" (CD II/1, 502). In the work of reconciliation God is present to the world as "the real subject of this real history [*das reale Subjekt dieser realen Geschichte*]" and by it God "leads the world to a future redemption" (CD II/1, 502; KD II/1, 565). This is the particular history of God with Israel and the Church, both of which have as their ultimate presupposition the person and history of Jesus Christ (CD II/1, 513, 515). Barth's trinitarian theology serves to inform his construal of God as the subject of a real and reconciling history with the world.

In order to account for the reconciling history of God with the world, Barth sets forth a contrasting depiction of God and creaturely reality at the level of *being*. Barth does not provide a condensed account of atonement in this section. Rather, like his treatment of God's creative work, he specifies an ontological condition in God, which underlies and makes effective the work of reconciliation and with it, points to the living reality of God in the world.

The transition from creation to reconciliation is fluid. The work of divine salvation contains within it the creative activity of God insofar as reconciliation itself is a new act that confirms God's prior identity as creator. It is also fluid, however, because reconciliation pertains to the relation between God and the creature, which, as will become clear, God sustains through the power of the divine being. In this sense the doctrine of reconciliation approximates that of the divine preservation. From this perspective Barth describes the sin of the creature as an act of resistance against the grace of God by which it is always and everywhere upheld. But the creature, specifically as creature, lacks the necessary grounds of its own autonomy. Its defection against the creator means that it faces "the possibility of self-annulment" (CD II/1, 503). The result is an internal conflict, a being at odds with itself, that characterizes creaturely existence. This clash of the creator and the dependent, yet defiant, creature sets the stage for the significance of Barth's appeal to the doctrine of the Trinity.

The potential of the creature for annulment is, in contrast, an impossibility for the being of God. In one of the few explicit mentions of the doctrine of the Trinity in Barth's dealings with the divine constancy, he writes that "God would not be God" if God did not exist in "perfect, original and ultimate peace between the Father and the Son by the Spirit" (CD II/1, 503). Within this sub-section of §31.2 no other reference to the trinitarian nature of God's being is made. But this pass-

ing reference is significant in at least two ways. First, and most basically, the invocation to the doctrine of the Trinity here serves as the most explicit foundation that Barth supplies in designating the peaceful nature of God's internal being. Second, the peace of God derived from the Father-Son relation stands in contrast to the hypocrisy of the creature in that God exists in irrevocable harmony with Godself. In other words: God *cannot* not be; the creature *can* not be. Still, more can be said: God, in the harmony of the inner-relations of the divine modes of being, is at peace, at one with Godself in eternal fellowship of love; the creature faces the possibility of its destitution.

Along these lines Barth describes reconciliation in terms of an encounter between God and the creature. Inasmuch as the creature "rejects the preserving grace of God," God "opposes the opposition of the creature to Himself"; God "confronts," "has mercy," and "befriends" the fallen creature (CD II/1, 504–06, 515). The significance of the divine peace, manifest in the Father-Son relation, lies in that God's very inability to be untrue to Godself—more appropriately, the divine faithfulness—is also the possibility of a reversal in the fortunes of the creature. "God cannot cease to be God," to cease to act as the "Lord of the world, and therefore of the sinful world" (CD II/1, 504).¹⁵ God is not captive to the internal conflict of the creature. "As the One who is peace in Himself," God is "not diverted from His purpose" to love the fallen creature in accordance with the divine loving, in a "overflowing of the divine fullness" (CD II/1, 504). For this reason God can be the creature's helper.

Furthermore, Barth's doctrine of the Trinity underlies a notion of divine immutability in the reconciling activity of God. God interacts with the fallen world and encounters the rebellious creature without undergoing a change in the self-identity of God. The possibility for genuine relation and an underlying continuity on the part of God has its basis in the trinitarian dimension of the divine peace. If God were sheer singularity, void of internal differentiation, then relation with another (i.e., created reality) would entail a fundamental alteration for the being of God. The biblical God, however, is "not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33). God is not at the whim of another. Rather, God relates to another out of the internally differentiated whole of the divine life.¹⁶ Everything hinges here on the fact that the substance of that life is peace. For in relating to another,

15 Barth writes: "His Godhead embraces both height and depth, both sovereignty and humility, both lordship and service. He is the Lord over life and death. He does not become a stranger to Himself when in His Son He also goes into a far country. He does not become another when in Jesus Christ He also becomes and is man. Even—and why should we not say precisely?—in this He is God in supreme *constancy*, in supreme affirmation of His faithfulness, not only to us, but primarily and supremely to Himself." *Church Dogmatics* IV/2, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 84; emphasis mine.

16 Similarly, Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 405–406.

God does not only remain true to God's self-identity, but works in others the peace that God knows in the fellowship of God's trinitarian being.¹⁷

It only remains to clarify that God, the "real subject" of reconciliation, also has a "real *history*" with the world (*CD II/1*, 502; emphasis mine). It is worth noting here that Barth's affirmation of a real, living history of God with the world runs up against a traditional notion of God's relation to creation as conceptual, and only creation's relation to God as real.¹⁸ That being said, Barth's account does not entail the introduction of relational potency into the life of God by means of interacting with the creature. God, in relating to another, remains the being-in-act that God is; but all importantly, the "essence of God . . . is . . . His *act* as Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (*CD II/1*, 273; emphasis mine). Barth's trinitarian starting point provides him the means to conceive of a prior relationality in the harmony of the divine life—the Spirit-filled peace between the Father and Son—by which God actively relates to creaturely reality out of the sheer abundance of God's being. In the plurality of times and contexts that make up the salvific history of God, the unchanging peace of God overflows anew to the creature that God loves and wills to restore. For this reason the self-identity of God goes unchanged in the history of God in the work of reconciliation.¹⁹

Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to illuminate the notably understated place of the doctrine of the Trinity in Barth's idea of the divine constancy. It is clear that I take Barth's trinitarian theology to have a significant degree of functionality despite the limited references to it in this paragraph of *CD II/1*. I have argued that Barth's

17 Incidentally, it is in this sense that Barth understands the scriptural accounts of the divine repenting (e.g., Gen 6:6; Jer 18:1–10; 26:2–3, 36:3; Joel 2:13). For in the divine repentance God does not "repent of being the One He is." And, moreover, the repentance of God almost always intends to invoke a corresponding repentance on the part of the creature. God chides the creature, but "as real chiding it is a function of His love active in freedom" (*CD II/1*, 495–98).

18 Thus Thomas Aquinas: "Since . . . God is outside the whole order of creation, and all creatures are ordered to Him, and not conversely, it is manifest that creatures are really related to God Himself; whereas in God there is no real relation to creatures, but a relation only in idea, inasmuch as creatures are referred to Him." *Summa Theologica*, I.Q13.A7.co., trans. English Dominican Fathers (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1920). For an overview and assessment of Thomas's position on the relation of God and the world, see Thomas G. Weinandy, *Does God Change? The Word's Becoming in the Incarnation* (Still River, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1984), 89–96; and, from a different angle, William Lane Craig, "Timelessness, Creation and God's Real Relation to the World," in *Laval théologique et philosophique* 56/1 (2000), 95–102.

19 One will note the exclusion of a treatment of redemption here. This largely has to do with the minimal attention Barth gives to the final stage of salvation history. Barth links reconciliation and redemption quite closely here: "reconciliation is real reconciliation because it makes us those who wait and look and move towards the redemption which has already taken place for us and is ready for us" (*CD II/1*, 510). It would be telling, although beyond the scope of this essay, to relate the scarce treatment of redemption with an eschatologically orientated construal such as that of Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, or Robert W. Jenson.

claims around the creative and reconciling activity of God are most naturally situated within his trinitarian theology, and thus best explicated accordingly.

The trinitarian background in Barth's treatment of creation locates the basis for what is other than God within the dynamism of God's life, and specifically, in the three modes of the divine being. Creation, in this way, is a free and orderly act. For creation has its ultimate basis in the antecedent alterity and origination of God's trinitarian being, just as the novelty of creation proceeds from the eternal newness the divine life. Similarly, Barth continues the account of salvation history by grounding the reconciling activity of God in the peace of the Spirit-mediated relation of the Father and Son. The essential nature of God in the fellowship of God's three modes of being allows Barth to speak of a real history of God with the fallen creature in which the self-identity of God goes unchanged. In fact, this point holds throughout. Relating to another out the riches of God's trinitarian being, God acts in conformity with Godself—as such, God is constant.

Finally, it was pointed out in the introduction that Barth's doctrine of God has been critiqued for not making explicit the connection between the divine love and freedom along trinitarian lines (Pannenberg). In his treatment of the divine freedom Barth describes the secondary absoluteness of God as the divine freedom to be immanent in another, first within God's triune self and, secondly, in the world.²⁰ The "principle and basis of all divine immanence" lay in the second person of the Trinity, the divine Son (*CD* II/1, 317). Barth's treatment of the divine constancy makes this point clear: the immanence of God in the divine Son, specifically in his reconciling history with the fallen creature, reveals the divine freedom to be an expression of the love of the Father and Son in the Spirit. This idea accords with Barth's claims around the unity of God's freedom and love. In the divine constancy, however, that unity is demonstrated at the particular level of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ—in the peace of God manifest in him by which God saves the internally conflicted creature. In this way, the unity of God's freedom and love comes to expression in the harmony that constitutes God's life as Father, Son, and Spirit.

20 The primary absoluteness of the divine freedom is the plenitude of God or God's unconditionality (*CD* II/1, 300–309).